

A publication of the DCFS  
Latino Advisory Committee

# Noticias

Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor  
Erwin McEwen, Acting Director

Fall Edition, 2007



# Noticias

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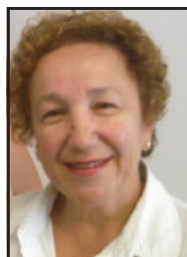
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## Welcome from the Chairperson

Maria Calderon

Saludos and Greetings. As I take on the role of Chairperson to the Latino Advisory Committee, I do so with pride and willingness to not only continue carrying out our mission, but to also advocate for the needs of our children and families in a collaborative manner.

I want to take this opportunity to applaud the work you do with our children and families, and in spite of the challenges or barriers you encounter in this field, your commitment to serving Latino families is recognized by this committee. Not only is LAC an advisory committee to the Director, but an instrument to maintain a bridge and connection to both DCFS and POS bilingual staff through the coordination of the planning of the annual Latino Family Institute Days, the traditional Octavitas, and *Noticias*. LAC is also working with D. Jean Ortega-Piron and the guardian's office with regard to immigration issues impacting our families.

The *Noticias* subcommittee continues to work diligently to bring you information and articles that reflect child welfare and social work practices pertinent to serving Latino families. In this edition you will find articles, upcoming community events, and other related information.

We are approaching our 19th annual DCFS Latino Institute Days—"Mi familia, mi casa, mi raza. My Family, My Home, My Culture. The Facets of Reunification"—scheduled for November 1-2, 2007. Not only does this theme reflect the work we do with our children and families, but it also represents the sharing of our cultural roots, our traditions, and our pride. We will continue our untiring commitment to the Institute Days, formerly known as the Hispanic Family Conference, and look forward to next year's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

We welcome your suggestions and submission of articles to *Noticias*. We would also honor your participation in the various LAC subcommittees. I want you to know that your voice is important, and your experiences and expertise will truly be an asset to any of the subcommittees.

Gracias,  
Maria Calderón, Chair  
Latino Advisory Committee



## Loyola School of Social Work awarded grant

In the fall of 2004, Loyola University School of Social Work was awarded one of four federal grants from the Children's Bureau of the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a curriculum and training program to prepare child welfare professionals to work more effectively with Latino children and families. The Loyola project is distinctive in its collaboration with a consortium of POS agencies, the Latino Consortium, and the Mexican Consulate of Chicago. It is also distinctive in its inclusion of immigration factors as one of the major foci in the curriculum.

The training curricula incorporates contemporary scholarship regarding Latino cultural factors relevant to child welfare practice such as: family structure and process, risk and protective factors, communication patterns, migratory experiences, acculturation stress and assimilation process, and help-seeking behaviors. It also addresses immigration trends and considerations, as well as service system barriers.

The goal of the training project is to enhance and expand system and practitioner capacity to effectively serve Latino children and families involved with the child welfare system to achieve safety, permanency and well-being. The grant has a three-year plan with the first year dedicated to the development of the curriculum and training model. In the second year the project team worked on the development of a video, a training manual, and other companion resource materials. Also in the second year of the funding period, the training curricula was piloted at the 2005 DCFS Latino Family Institute and was modified based on the feedback provided by the pilot participants. The last 18 months of the grant have focused on the implementation of the training curriculum statewide. In the remaining months, the grant activities will center on the evaluation of the project and the development a Web page to widen the dissemination of training materials and resource information.

While Loyola was the grantee for the project, the partner agencies should be

credited for the success of the initiative. The DCFS Training Division was a key partner that provided support throughout the project period. The Latino Consortium played a pivotal role in the grant from its inception. Through their hard work and coordination with the Training Division, the Consortium exceeded the grant target of training 750 individuals.

The Mexican Consulate of Chicago was also an active collaborator, contributing immensely to the direction of the project and extended its reach beyond the United States. Because of the working relationship with the consulate, a number of additional projects were developed, including the student exchange with Mexican Universities and a study of Mexican immigrant families in the Chicago area (Families in Transition: A Pilot Study of the Impact of Cross-National Relocation on Family Well-Being) that is currently being conducted in conjunction with Mexico's federal human service agency, Sistema Nacional para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia (SNDIF), and the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).

The American Humane Association also emerged as a key partner, co-sponsoring *Migration: A Critical issue for Child Welfare Transnational Research and Policy Forum*, a conference held at Loyola last July. Key components of the initiative to date have included a special issue of the American Humane journal *Protecting Children* on the same topic (Volume 21, Number 2, 2006) and the creation of a Migration and Child Welfare National Network that share information, resources, and strategies through an electronic list server and regular teleconferences.

For a copy of the final report of the forum or of the special journal issue, as well as the how to join the Migration and Child Welfare National Network, visit the American Humane Web site: [www.americanhumane.org](http://www.americanhumane.org). For more information about the HHS grant project, contact Robert Mindell at [rmindel@luc.edu](mailto:rmindel@luc.edu) or Maria Vidal de Haymes at [mvidal@luc.edu](mailto:mvidal@luc.edu).



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## Loyola University School of Social Work students studying in Mexico

The United Nations estimates that one in every 35 persons worldwide is residing outside of their country of birth. Nowhere is the trend of migration more marked than in the U.S., which receives more immigrants and refugees than any other nation and is currently home to more than 35.2 million foreign-born individuals, a figure amounting to 12.1% of the total current U.S. population. Furthermore, the Census Bureau estimates that one in five U.S. residents are either foreign born or a first-generation child of an immigrant and more than half of all foreign-born U.S. residents have come from Latin America.

The impact of globalization and migration are producing a set of intractable challenges that cross national borders. These challenges are experienced immediately at the level of the family and include: persistent or periodic ruptures in families and social support due to mobility and migration; exposure to violence and exploitation related to migration; poverty and economic insecurity; vulnerability related to legal status; and cultural and linguistic isolation. For the field of social work, and child welfare in particular, these trends pose significant challenges regarding language and cultural differences, dislocation and adjustment of families, legal status issues, transnational family constellations, and inter-governmental and agency relations.

Loyola University School of Social Work is responding to these population trends and human needs in creative ways that address the immediate needs of immigrant communities and prepare graduates for prac-

tice with the nation's growing immigrant population. Towards this end, Loyola University School of Social Work has developed a Migration Studies sub-specialty, which includes a number of opportunities for students to be placed in intensive field placements abroad. The goal of the migration focused sub-specialty and the field placement exchange is to enhance the participant's understanding of the complex policy, practice, and administrative issues present in providing culturally and linguistically responsive social work services and interventions that enhance well-being and social justice for vulnerable communities and families impacted by migration. The Migration Studies in Social Work sub-specialty offers three core courses: Migration Dynamics and U.S. Social Policy; Social Work Practice with Immigrant Communities; and Social Policy and Practice: Migration, Social Justice, and Human Rights. In addition, practicum opportunities in immigrant-sending communities abroad and immigrant-receiving agencies and communities in the U.S. enhance classroom learning.

The international field placement opportunities for Loyola Students have been developed in collaboration with Jesuit Migrant Services of Mexico and Iberoamericana University in Puebla and Mexico City. The first group of Loyola BSW and MSW students is currently in Mexico participating in a rotational, rigorous field placement that provides students with the opportunity to work with communities impacted by migration and that reflect diversity in Mexican communities (e.g., urban, rural, and indigenous) and in diverse practice contexts (e.g., clinics, schools, rural field offices). The student group includes Matt Brown, Lina Munoz, Cecilia Quinn, and Justin Wenzell. The rotation includes time in Mexico City and in villages in the states of Puebla and Veracruz. In addition to fieldwork, students are receiving the benefit of a number of workshops provided by Iberoamericana faculty and Jesuit Migrant Services staff.

Loyola has been able to extend international field placements for Iberoamericana University students through collaboration with Maryville Academy and Catholic



*The goal of the field placement exchange is to enhance the students' understanding of the importance of providing culturally-responsive social work services that enhance the well-being of families impacted by migration.*

Charities of the Chicago Archdiocese. These creative and generous partners are hosting students from Iberoamericana University at the Maryville campus where they are provided lodging while they work in several Maryville and Catholic Charities programs that serve the Mexican migrant community in the area. The students will be coming to the U.S. to complete the 480 hours of service to the Mexican community required of all undergraduate students in Mexico. The service hours are a federal graduation requirement for Mexican students regardless of the area of study or the university they attend. While in the U.S., the students will work on projects that attend to the needs of vulnerable Mexican nationals residing here. The first group of students from Iberoamericana University consisted of five senior psychology students from Mexico City with an interest in services related to migrant resettlement and well-being: Mirna Rodriguez Chacon, Maria Elena Chimes, Tamara Niebla Delgado, Rocio Orellana Mendez, and Alejandra Lopez Vasquez. These young women had a very rich and productive experience while at Maryville and returned to Mexico with a fuller understanding of the challenges faced by migrants when they come to the U.S. The next group of students coming to Maryville from Mexico will be arriving on August 6.

For more information about the exchange program or the migration studies sub-specialty, please contact Maria Vidal de Haymes at [mvidal@luc.edu](mailto:mvidal@luc.edu) or 312-915-7020.



*Loyola students are given the opportunity to work with communities impacted by migration.*

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# Permanency planning toward reunification – and the Latino Family

By Carmen Aviles

As many of you know, DCFS has been delivering Permanency Planning toward Reunification Training to all child welfare workers, supervisors, and managers. The goal of the training is to increase the number of children that can be reunited with their families. The Reunification Model re-emphasizes good casework practice by providing new clinical tools which assure every client receives the same quality and level of services throughout the state of Illinois. One of the key points is engaging clients as “stakeholders” in the process of making the changes needed for children and families to be safe. The client is in the driver’s seat as an active participant in identifying needs; setting goals; service planning; guiding the selection of members to the child and family team; and evaluating the effectiveness of services and interventions along with the caseworker and other helping professionals.

A primary task of the caseworker is to collaborate with the parent in identifying internal and external protective factors. The focus is clearly on identifying strengths—those that the family and children bring to the table and those in the families’ “support network” community and culture. The goal is to identify and bring together a combination of resources that will support the child and their family. The model emphasizes collaboration among all of the stakeholders including the courts, early intervention programs, and the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, to name a few. The practices outlined in the Reunification Model assists in promoting positive outcomes for children and families. Anchored in “evidence-based” research, the Reunification Model is focused on client-driven, family-centered, and strength-based clinical practices that facilitate safety, permanency, and well-being.

Marilyn Arnold and I conducted a workshop at the Latino Family Institute Days titled, “Permanency Planning

toward Reunification Model and the Latino Family.” The presentation focused on incorporating culturally competent practice with Latino families as an integral component of the Reunification Model. In order to effectively engage families involved with child welfare services, workers need to address immediate needs and concerns as identified by the family. A dialogue needs to be facilitated that help the clients identify solutions to their problems; identify culturally competent interventions and services; identify family support networks. This must be done within a climate that engages and empowers them to become an active participant in the helping process.

All behavior needs to be understood within the context of culture in order to effectively assess the presenting problem, understand needs and strengths, and facilitate interventions that the client will respond to and are within their cultural context. We need to know the types of areas to assess and—in partnership with the parent and the Child and Family team—facilitate and develop culturally competent service plans and interventions. Helping professionals need to allow the Latino family the opportunity to relate their life stories.

Most Latino families will express their experience of migrating to a country with conflicting values, beliefs, and practices that are foreign to both the child and family. Unfortunately, for many it will involve stories of traumatic events endured in their native land or the trauma children and parents experienced during the process of migration: stories of torture, war, exploitation, separation from loved ones, and dire and abject poverty. For many, the stress of migration and poverty places incredible strains on family life and on their ability to cope with the demand of daily life—the types of pressures that can result in abuse and neglect.

As a result of my background and

experience in working with Latino clients, I developed an outline to assist workers in conducting a culturally competent assessment.\* This outline looks at domains that need to be explored when practicing in a culturally competent manner and from the perspective of providing support and effective services to the family. The following are the domains we explored:

- Migration
- Economic Status
- Native Country
- Beliefs regarding children
- Development of Cultural Identity in Children
- Cultural View of Helpers and Help Seeking
- Family Structure
- English Language Proficiency
- Bi-Culturalism, Acculturation, and Assimilation
- Religion and Spiritual Practices
- Beliefs and practices regarding children
- Development of Cultural Identity in Children
- Cultural Perspective on Helpful Interventions

Within each of these domains the focus should be on culture, environment, and its impact on the structure and functioning of the family.

During the workshop we addressed the phases of service intervention and the areas within these components where we can incorporate the information gathered during the cultural assessment into the service plan and throughout the helping process.

Lastly, we discussed the importance of referring clients to non-traditional, community-based services and interventions, and religious organizations within their own communities. In order to engage clients as stakeholders we need to understand the system of support they rely on during times of crisis. When an

*Continued on page 6*



## Reunification, con't.

emergency arises in a Latino family, where does the family turn to for help? In Latino communities throughout the state of Illinois, help is not sought in the psycho-therapeutic arena. Depending on the problem, Latino families will tend to seek help from the following sources:

1. extended family (or those who they define as "family")
2. priest/pastor
3. civic organization
4. a spiritually healer (espiritista/ curandero)
5. a neighbor or friend
6. community-based non-profit agencies
7. food pantries
8. community-based emergency housing

As we look to implement a strength-based model, we must allow the client to remain firmly in the "driver's seat" and let *them* select the individuals and institutions they trust to help in times of need. Examples of supportive interventions would include such things as church-based marital/family counseling or a referral to a civic organization that can assist the client in accessing available resources for immigrant families.

We need to expand our definitions of community and family. We need to partner with the organizations—*those which the "client" turns to for help*—as a means of support while the family looks to change. This does not negate the provision of traditional child welfare services but incorporates the client's natural support systems into the service plan. If clients are an active participant throughout the helping process, they are more likely to participate in traditional services. In conclusion, it must be our mutual goal to deliver services in a culturally competent manner that engages and empowers clients.

\*To obtain a copy of the cultural assessment outline, e-mail your request to [Julia.Camacho-de-monzon@illinois.gov](mailto:Julia.Camacho-de-monzon@illinois.gov).

## Statewide Partnering With Parents initiative

By Ray Gates

DCFS recently began a statewide initiative that is designed to enhance the child welfare system's ability to more effectively communicate and work with parents. Called the Partnering with Parents Initiative, this work consists of two major approaches.

The first approach involves presenting Parent Information Fairs in the various regions and subregions around the state. The first Parent Information Fair was held at the Cook South regional office on June 28, 2006. This was followed by a Fair in Peoria on November 2, 2006, a Fair in Fairview Heights on June 21, 2007, and one in Champaign on June 28, 2007. These Fairs bring together service providers from the community and experts from DCFS and POS partner agencies who set up displays about services that are available to parents. The fairs also involve formal presentations to help educate parents about other services and resources that are available. An important part of the presentations includes a parents' panel where parents address other parents about the challenges they faced in navigating the child welfare system. They also give tips on how parents can benefit from this experience.

The second approach in the Partnering with Parents Initiative involves establishing Partnering With Parents Advisory Councils in the various DCFS regions and subregions. The first DCFS Partnering With Parents Advisory Council was established in Chicago in 2005. Since then councils have been established in Rockford and Peoria. Downstate councils meet monthly at sites in the community that are easily accessible to parents. Very soon, Partnering With Parents Advisory Councils will start meeting in the East St. Louis subregion as well as in Champaign. The plan for downstate is to continue adding advisory councils until there are enough to provide easy



accessibility for most parents in the respective regions.

The need for something like the Partnering with Parents Initiative was pointed out during the Department's federal review several years ago when reviewers determined that the Department needed to enhance its ability to effectively engage parents. To address this finding, staff exchange information with parents at council meetings and give parents opportunities to have input into policy, practice, and resources.

The Initiative is also designed to assist in effecting timelier reunifications. Parents learn about reunification and the importance of partnering with foster parents and workers at the Information Fairs and at the Partnering With Parents Advisory Council meetings. The concept of partnership is being emphasized when staff interact with parents at these meetings, and the plan is to continue spreading the emphasis of this concept.

Fairs and meetings are open to all parents who are being served by the Illinois child welfare system as well as to parents who have been previously served. For more information, or to join a parent group, call the DCFS Office of Foster Parent Support Services at 217-524-2422.

# Cook County Partnering with Parents initiative

By Donnell Bishop-Ward

The Partnering with Parents Initiative was created in the Clinical Division and represents a way for DCFS to work more closely with parents that are served by the Department and child welfare agencies. The program consists of Partnering With Parents Advisory Councils throughout the state whose primary role is to advise the Department about issues affecting parents. Parental input can be invaluable in helping to guide agency planning and practice that directly impacts children and families.

The Initiative in Cook County is currently composed of a ten-member, countywide Core Council that represents the interests of all Cook County parents and nine office councils that represent all three Cook Regions. Parents from the Core Council organized themselves into five committees as follows: Training and Development; Information; Legal; Support; and Regional Development. Each committee has specific goals and members are currently identifying objectives and action plans. To date fifty-six additional parents have been referred from service staff, and eighty-three parents from Intact Services are waiting to be contacted for regional council membership.

In addition, twenty-five people are serving on the Parent Steering Committee as policy consultants, informational resources, and program experts that help support and advocate for parents. The Steering Committee includes the DCFS Guardian, ACR Associate Deputy, Statewide Burgos Coordinator, Statewide Family to Family Coordinator, Paternal Involvement Director, Haymarket Drug Treatment Director, Juvenile Court Legal Counsel, Cook South Regional Administrator, Child Protection Program Manager, direct service workers, Agency Performance Liaisons, and others.

The councils and the Steering Committee meet monthly. Core Council meet-

ings are for parents only in order to provide support to each other, share their challenges, and address issues in the best interest of their children and families. Bimonthly meetings are also held between the two groups for joint planning and program implementation.

Council recruitment is ongoing and includes featuring parents in presentations. Several parent council members have been invited guests at staff meetings and conferences. One father presented on a television program. Clinical screening staff attend council meetings to confidentially assist parents who have individual casework and service plan issues.

Furthermore, in-service workshops and institutes are planned each year to enhance parents' knowledge of the many child welfare and system issues with which they have to contend.

On Saturday, June 30, 2007, over 100 parents participated in a day-long institute they titled, "Making Things Happen Through Self-Empowerment: Keeping Our Kids." Parent Gregory Cox delivered an inspiring, thought-provoking keynote address. Other regional and core council parents planned and organized the entire event, as well as co-presented along with eighteen experts from the public and private sector. Experts included DCFS guardian, D. Jean Ortega-Piron; States Attorney Bob Dwyer; Public Defender David Roleck; Burgos Coordinator, Lourdes Rodriguez; David Webb, Director of the Fatherhood Initiative; Monique Smith, Director of Foster Care at Volunteers of America; Bakahia Madison and Diane Mariani, Haymarket Directors; Cook South Regional Administrator, Michael Byrd; Cook Central Program Manager, Donna Steele; Carmen Velasquez, Statewide Coordinator for Family to Family; Benita Uti, SOS Children's Villages



*Partnering with Parents events give parents of children in DCFS care the opportunity to share their experiences and learn about available services.*

Director; Sheila Freeman, Agency performance liaison; and many others.

The presenters helped advise parents how to successfully navigate the court and DCFS systems, as well as on the importance of appropriate attitudes and appearances in court that included a live demonstration in a do's and don'ts fashion show.

Most parents in the Partnering With Parents program acknowledge that they made decisions that put their children at risk, and they are now trying to learn what changes are needed for them to resume caring for their children. They are actively reaching out for help and we here in Cook County are reaching back to assist them.

Any parent who is currently receiving services from DCFS or who received services in the past is eligible for membership on any of the councils. Questions about Cook County councils should be directed to Donnell Bishop-Ward or Marsha Harris. Both can be reached at 312-328-2828. Parent participation is welcomed. All parents are reimbursed for childcare, transportation, and parking costs to attend council meetings.



## Save the Date!

**Illinois Department of  
Children and Family  
Services 19<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Latino Family  
Institute Days**

***Mi familia, mi casa,  
mi raza.***

***My Family, My Home,  
My Culture. The Facets  
of Reunification.***

**November 1 - 2, 2007**

**Hyatt Hotel**

**1400 Corporate Drive  
Lisle, Illinois**



**Latino Advisory Committee**

## An expression of gratitude

By Jeanie Ortega-Piron, DCFS Deputy Director/Guardian

A few weeks ago I was asked to help coordinate an effort to recognize one of our own—Ms. Naida Valdes—a woman of deep dedication and devotion to the children and families she has served and to the friends she has made.

While reading an article written about Ms. Valdes by some of her co-worker friends, I reflected upon my memories of Naida, too. Back in 1989, I was the DCFS Chief Administrative Law Judge. One afternoon I was called up to the Governor's Office to meet with his Deputy Chief of Human Services, Jess McDonald. As I got off the elevator and walked to Jess's Office I noticed a group of DCFS employees sitting outside the office and they weren't happy. That was my introduction to the IDCFS Workers Reaching for Excellence and my introduction to Naida Valdes. Jess wanted to discuss with me the concerns that Naida and the rest of the group had expressed about the lack of Hispanic services and workers within DCFS. He wanted change and he wanted me to work with the group. Little did I know what I was in for, but how happy I am that Jess called. From that initial meeting, I developed a life-long friendship with this wonderful woman, Naida Valdes. What a force to be reckoned with. Nothing seems adequate when trying to capture the essence of Naida and the work that she did and continues to do for our children.

During the past eighteen years that I have known Naida, her main focus has been with the Latino children and families that we serve. Naida has spoken stridently on behalf of the development of sufficient and appropriate services for

our Latino clients. As the Guardian for abused and neglected children in Illinois, I have worked closely with Naida on some of these issues, and I know that we are privileged to have had Naida advocate on behalf of our children. At the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Latino Family Conference, I acknowledged Naida as one of the very dedicated staff who helped my office in identifying youth who could obtain a documented legal status and as one of the individuals who fought for the creation of the Latino Family Conference.

As you will read in the following article, throughout the years Naida has been called upon to perform a variety of administrative tasks within the Department and she has done so willingly and efficiently. Whenever she sees a need, she eagerly volunteers to fill the gap. Her contributions have been crucial to the Department's work. Not only has Naida fulfilled her responsibilities in a professional and diligent manner, but she has consistently juggled her personal schedule to meet the demands of the Department and the needs of our children, families, and staff. She is a woman of obvious energy, intelligence, and integrity.

The last few months have not been easy for Naida or for us. It isn't easy to let go. Though she is not with us as she continues her recuperation, I want to publicly acknowledge Naida for all her efforts throughout the years.

Naida, God bless you. Thank you so much for all you have done and taught us. We miss and love you.

***Our greatest natural resource is the minds of our children.***

*-Walt Disney*



# Tribute to Naida Valdez

By Ana Campos and Denise Alvarez

We would like to take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge the 30+ years of selfless dedication of Ms. Naida J. Valdes to the children and families of Illinois.

Naida's career began at the Department of Public Aid on Dec. 1, 1976. On December 6, 1979, Ms. Mayra Ramos-Piazza recruited Naida to come and work for DCFS. Then under the tutelage of Ms. Jane Archer, a child protection supervisor, Naida became well versed on interpreting policy and procedures. Fortunately for all of us, Naida turned out to be a bastion in defending and securing services for the Hispanic children and their families that DCFS served. In 1989, Ms. Valdes and four other workers founded IDCFS Workers Reaching for Excellence with the purpose of securing from the DCFS administration more services for the Hispanic community and more bilingual/bicultural workers to deal with the high caseloads at that time.

Through Naida's efforts the IDCFS Workers Reaching for Excellence was able to secure the pro bono legal services of Ms. Kathy Ryan, Ms. Phyllis Ryan, Mr. Patrick M. Ouimet, and Mr. Richard L. Inskeep to represent all DCFS Hispanic workers in their efforts to obtain appropriate services for Hispanic clients and sufficient numbers of bilingual/bicultural staff. Additionally, this group met with then-Governor Thompson's Deputy Chief of Staff, Phil Gonet, and his Deputy Chief of Human Services, Jess McDonald, to discuss their concerns about Hispanic clients and Hispanic workers. One of the results of these meetings was that Naida also became part of developing the Division of Cook County Operations Hispanic Advisory Committee with the assistance and support of then-Senator Miguel Del Valle. Today it is known as the Latino Advisory Committee and continues to advocate for these issues among others.

Because of Naida's courage, tenacity, and integrity, many bilingual workers benefited from her sacrifice by obtaining career advancements, which previously would have been unattainable as most workers feared to be involved in such endeavors. Many individuals do not know that when Mr. McDonald became the DCFS Director he approached Naida with an enticing offer of a very powerful position, but she declined. Naida felt that her supervisory position would be more conducive to being vocal in defending and advocating the rights of the Hispanic population who the DCFS workers serve. Naida kept true to her convictions.

In her role as supervisor/PSA for more than 20 years, Naida always supported and went beyond her call of duty with her clients and workers. She was loyal and defended workers whenever their integrity was questioned as long as the

***The test of the  
morality of a society  
is what it does for its  
children.***

*-Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

employee followed Department policies and provided services to their clients. One can say that she knew all of her unit cases collectively, as well as her individual workers. Naida assisted the workers with visits, no matter how late, how inclement the weather, or how dangerous the situations that came up in any given case, without counting emergencies that might come up, and even if it meant working over the weekend without remuneration or recognition. Further-



*Naida Valdez (middle row, white shirt, fifth from left) and her colleagues posed for this photo to celebrate finishing or graduating from supervisory training in the 80s.*

more, she assisted workers from other teams in the absence of their supervisors, no matter how busy she was with her own duties.

She was involved in many projects, which included helping to establish a North Area Office Nursery in Dec. 1988, a first for DCFS. Naida's testimony and that of Mr. Luis Soto (a former DCFS supervisor and founding member of IDCFS Workers Reaching for Excellence), were instrumental in effecting changes in the monitoring of the Burgos Consent Decree. Naida was also chosen by the NAO administration to spearhead the "Project Safe Program" geared towards drug addicted mothers and their offspring. In addition, due to her savvy computer skills, which were self-taught, she developed forms that were eventually used by DCFS and improved others in order to facilitate and reduce the repetitive workload. The administration sought her out for such occasions.

We are all very sad that due to a slow recuperation from a recent illness, Naida had to resign from her position. Naida will be sorely missed as a friend, as a mentor, and for her wide-range of knowledge of the Department, its rules, and procedures.

We thank and salute you, Naida, for your fervor, dedication, and advocacy in helping those that did not have a voice. Good luck and Godspeed.

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# Latino Advisory Committee and African American Advisory Council Meeting

By Michael Burns

The African American Advisory Council (AAAC) hosted the semi-annual joint meeting with the Latino Advisory Committee (LAC) in Chicago on May 17, 2007. AAAC and LAC members always look forward to the opportunity of meeting jointly to share ideas on how to best advocate for supportive services to the children, families, and staff that we represent. Members also know there will be a great feast for all to enjoy.

Discussion focused on reviewing the processes/procedures that are used in the production of Department newsletters and the marketing of the annual conferences/institute days. Sharing this information makes it possible for both groups to identify and make suggestions to streamline the networking procedures within the Department. It is our hope that if revised procedures are implemented, newsletters can be produced in a timelier manner, and there will be an increase in the number of participants statewide at the two annual conferences/institutes.

Both organizations provided updates on projects and activities they have been

involved in over the past six months. LAC announced their approval to conduct presentations at CORE Trainings explaining the role and purpose of LAC. A Power Point presentation was developed for use in these training venues. It was suggested that the AAAC should also consider making presentations at the CORE Trainings. AAAC will pursue this task.

The LAC reported on the status of their 2007 institute days event as it pertained to location, speakers, and presenters. LAC also recently published another edition of their newsletter and discussed a position paper that was completed in regards to the closure of the Catholic Charities foster care program and its impact on the continuity of services and case managers. There is a great deal of concern for children that may have been placed in the homes of undocumented individuals. LAC is concerned about continuing to be available for children this may affect.

The AAAC reported on a position paper that is being developed on issues and concerns for post adoption and subsidized guardianship youth. The paper will be



*HAC and LAC members discussed ways to support children and families at their semi-annual joint meeting*

presented to Acting Director Erwin McEwen. The AAAC also provided an update on the Permanency Enhancement Initiative, a collaborative effort between the Illinois African American Family Commission, DCFS Regions, and the Council. Central Region's Symposium was held in March and Southern Region was planning for their Symposium in August.

The next meeting will be hosted by LAC on December 19, 2007, at 2550 W. Bradley, Chicago.

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## Día Del Niño Family Festival

The National Museum of Mexican Art's 11<sup>th</sup> Chicago Día del Niño Family Festival at the UIC Pavilion took place on April 14, 2007. Family participants at this event were provided with opportunities to engage in art activities, wellness screen-



*Andy Martinez distributed Water Safety Coloring Books and other informational materials to Día del Niño participants.*

ings, nutrition and fitness activities, and interactive games.

DCFS co-sponsored the event. Cynthia Moreno, Deputy Director of the Division of Service Intervention, Burgos Coordinator Lourdes Rodriguez, Roberto Sanabria from Affirmative Action, and Evelyn Martinez, a Latino Advisory Committee member, provided face painting for the children and family photo opportunities to the participants. Jose Lopez, Office of Latino Services, Andy Martinez from Communications, and Carlos Nakay from the Office of Employee Services, supplied DCFS information and gave away crayons and coloring books for the children.

Approximately 50 organizations and venues were represented at this event. In addition to DCFS, the Department of

Human Services, Department of Mental Health, Erie Family Health Center, American Cancer Society, Chicago Park District, Art Institute, Shedd Aquarium, Field Museum, DuSable Museum, and the Museum of Science and Industry provided information and other activities for those attending. The Chicago White Sox's very own mascot, Southpaw, and former player Minnie Minoso were also in attendance and provided autographs. Music and entertainment were provided by Cuerdas Clasicas, Sones de Mexico, and the Jesse White Tumblers.

If you're looking for a good way to spend quality family time and not have to spend money, consider attending next year's event. We will send out information to let you know once next year's date has been scheduled; hope to see you there.

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## Upcoming Latino Events

The Office of Latino Services / Office of Affirmative Action invites you to volunteer and represent your agency! For volunteer opportunities and more information, please contact Jose Lopez at 773-292-7868 or Jose.J.Lopez@illinois.gov.

| <u>DATE</u>    | <u>EVENT</u>  | <u>LOCATION</u>                         |
|----------------|---|---|
| September 16   | 26 <sup>th</sup> Street Mexican Parade  | 26 <sup>th</sup> & Sacramento, Chicago  |
| September 22   | 21 <sup>st</sup> Annual HISLEA President's Ball                                 | Drury Inn, Oak Brook                    |
| October 4-5    | International Hispanic/Latino Mental Health Conference                          | Location to be announced, Chicago       |
| October 20     | Annual Student Leadership Conference  | Hyatt Regency Hotel, Chicago            |
| October 24     | Illinois Hispanic Scholarship Fund / IAHSE Banquet                              | Holiday Inn Chicago Mart Plaza, Chicago |
| October 25     | 20 <sup>th</sup> Annual IAHSE Conference  | Holiday Inn Chicago Mart Plaza, Chicago |
| November 1-2   | 19 <sup>th</sup> Annual DCFS Latino Family Institute                            | Hyatt, Lisle                            |
| November 10-11 | Annual Hispanic Book Fair Festival  | Unity School, Cicero                    |
| December 6     | Illinois Latino Legislative Caucus Foundation 5 <sup>th</sup> Annual Conference | Stephens Convention Center, Rosemont    |

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## Save the Date!

**The DCFS 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Latino Family Institute Days is scheduled for November 1 & 2, 2007, at the Hyatt Hotel in Lisle, Illinois. This year's theme is "Mi familia, mi casa, mi raza. My Family, My Home, My Culture. The Facets of Reunification."**

### The Celeste Peña Community Service Award

The Celeste Peña Community Service Award is a recognition annually bestowed upon an individual who, like Celeste Peña, has excelled in enhancing services and opportunities for Latino families and children. The nomination for this award is open to any person who has demonstrated excellence in the following areas:

- A long and productive history of working with families and children
- Strong community development and involvement
- Has inspired and promoted educational opportunities
- Is dedicated to promoting and enhancing the field of social work

The Latino Family Institute Days Planning Committee is responsible for the dissemination of the award information and for the collection of the nominations. The Peña family selects the recipient of this award from the group of nominees. The 2007 winner of the Celeste Peña Community Service Award will be announced at the 19th Annual Latino Family Institute Days evening reception scheduled for November 1, 2007, at the Hyatt Hotel in Lisle, Illinois

***The deadline for nominations is September 28th, 2007.*** If you want additional information or need the nomination form, please contact: Maria Calderón at Maria.Calderon@illinois.gov or at (773) 866-5806.



*Noticias* is brought to you by the Latino Advisory Committee and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. It is distributed to DCFS employees, POS agencies, and agencies affiliated with DCFS. The newsletter includes articles pertinent to child welfare, Latino welfare issues, and DCFS/POS programs, and strives to be an informative source for staff by providing updates on new child welfare initiatives as well as upcoming events.

It is our hope to continue providing staff with a vehicle for the sharing of information. In this endeavor, we are looking for your input, submission of articles, and suggestions for improving *Noticias*. Articles related to your

experiences with families and personal stories are also greatly appreciated. Please submit articles, information about upcoming events or news to:

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Chicago, Illinois 60651  
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If you would like more information or would like to participate in one of the LAC subcommittees, contact Maria Calderon at [Maria.Calderon@illinois.gov](mailto:Maria.Calderon@illinois.gov).



**Special thanks to the Newsletter Committee Members:**

Dahlia Roman, Maria Calderon, Carol Kline, Carmen Alvarez, Victor Flores and Madeline Gonzales-Garcia.

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